SHRIMATI BRINDA KARAT: .....whether he will give them that marketing outlets? For example, he has so many marketing outlets of the Central Government in different States. Will he, at least, reserve a percentage of those outlets for Urban Self-Help Groups to be able to sell their products, including railways, if I might add?

SHRI SAUGATA RAY: Madam, your point on gender discrimination and gender problem among the urban poor is well taken. One of the reasons for urban poverty is migration. As you know, out of our total population of 1,029 million, 307 million are migrant population. Out of that, the female migrants constitute 216.7 million. So, a large number of women are migrating and it is seen that the migration of women mainly takes place due to marriage. Sixty-four per cent of the women are moving from rural areas to the urban areas due to their marriage. We have fixed the targets under the SJSRY for 2009-10 laying particular emphasis on the problems of women. We have set the targets for 2009-2010. The number of urban poor to be assisted for individual micro enterprises is 25,000. The number of urban poor women to be assisted for group micro enterprises is 25,000. The number of urban poor women to be assisted for thrift and credit with revolving fund assistance is 50,000. The number of urban poor to be imparted skill training is two lakhs. So, we have set quite an ambitious target in the whole programme and we are providing them. You will be happy to know that our achievement, as reported on 15.11.2009, is very good with regard to women. The number of urban poor women already assisted for group micro enterprises is 10,556. The number of urban poor women assisted for thrift and credit with revolving fund assistance is 20,338. The number of urban poor imparted skill training is 76,972. So, we are making considerable progress towards empowering women in the urban areas, especially, the urban poor.

**Telephone advisory committee**

*206. DR. K. MALAISAMY: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the guidelines of his Ministry for the appointment of MPs on the Telephone Advisory Committee and the tenure of such Committee;

(b) whether there has been an inordinate delay in the appointment of such Committee in Tamil Nadu; and

(c) whether there has been a delay in the case of other States too?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI SACHIN PILOT): (a) to (c) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

***Statement***

(a) As per extant policy, Hon'ble MPs of Lok Sabha except Ministers shall be members of any one Telephone Advisory Committee (TAG) falling within their constituency and Hon'ble MPs of Rajya Sabha except Ministers shall be members of any one TAC falling within their adopted constituency for Member of Parliament Local Area Development (MPLAD) programme. Normally, the tenure of TACs is two years.

(b) and (c) No, Sir. All 359 Telecom District Level TACs including 20 TACs of Tamil Nadu have already been constituted [tenure of 348 TACs are upto 30.09.2011 and of 11 TACs are upto 30.06.2010].

DR. K. MALAISAMY: Sir, the answer given by the hon. Minister comes under the category of either avoiding or evading, if not amounting to misleading. The brief answer given by the hon. Minister looks as if everything is all right. But in reality it is not so.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please put your question. Don't make comments.

DR. K. MALAISAMY: I am coming to the point. My first supplementary is this. As per the answer, the MPs are entitled to be a Member of the Telephone Advisory Committee (TAC) for a period of two years. While it is so, my specific question is this. Once the tenure is over it will be automatically renewed if the membership is continuing. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether there is a break period between the last tenure and renewal. I mean whether there is a long break. I would like to know whether there is a break period between the constitution of the first Committee and the second Committee. The Minister can answer straightaway.

SHRI SACHIN PILOT: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the Telephone Advisory Committees are constituted to get a constant feed-back for the services that the BSNL and the MTNL provide in this country. In order to give a representative character to the TACs, the hon. Members of Parliament have sought to give their nominees. Five such nominees are inducted in the TACs. All Members of Parliament, except the Ministers, are Members of the TACs. As of date, we have 359 TACs, including 20 TACs of Tamil Nadu. They have already been constituted. ...*(Interruptions)*...

DR. K. MALAISAMY: Is there any break? He has not answered that question. ...*(Interruptions)*...

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI A. RAJA): Sir, a break will be there because when the tenure of a Member of Parliament is going to end definitely another Member has to come, whether it is the Lok Sabha or the Rajya Sabha. ...*(Interruptions)*...

DR. K. MALAISAMY: What happens if the Member is continuing? ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just a minute. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI A. RAJA: Even if he is continuing, the tenure of the TAC is of two years. Having completed two years, the MP, whether he is existing MP or the new, has to suggest new names or say that he wants to stick to the old names.

DR. V. MAITREYAN: He is asking about the MP himself.

SHRI A. RAJA: The MP is automatically a Member. The problem is. ...*(Interruptions)*...

DR. K. MALAISAMY: I am sorry, Sir. There was a break, an inordinate break.

SHRI A. RAJA: It is only when the Committee is constituted that members can be nominated. There cannot be meetings of the Committee unless it is constituted. So, we wanted to constitute the Committee, after which, automatically, by virtue of his/her official capacity, the Members would be appointed in the new TAC.

DR. K. MALAISAMY: Sir, my second supplementary is very specific. A Member of Parliament, apart from his/her own membership, can nominate five persons to be appointed in the Committee. As far as I am concerned, I received a communication from the Ministry that 1 could suggest certain names. I, then, wrote to the Ministry suggesting names of some people. But there was no response from them. Then, I wrote a D.O. letter, specifically, to the hon. Minister. After having waited for months, after having seen that there was no response, I reported the matter to the hon. Prime Minister, stating that my letter had not been responded to and that he should kindly look into the matter...

MR. CHAIRMAN: What is your supplementary?

DR. K. MALAISAMY: The hon. Prime Minister was kind enough to reply to my letter. He seems to have instructed...

MR. CHAIRMAN: What is your supplementary?

DR. K. MALAISAMY: After the communication from the Prime Minister, I came to know a week back that a committee has been constituted. I have got all the records...

MR. CHAIRMAN: I know that you have got all the records. Please put your supplementary.

DR. K. MALAISAMY: It only shows how they were silent for months, and it is only after I wrote to the Prime Minister and he intervened...

MR. CHAIRMAN: This is not a supplementary...

DR. K. MALAISAMY: Sir, this is a matter of fact.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You have to put a specific supplementary.

DR. K. MALAISAMY: Sir, my supplementary is that there has been an inordinate delay on the part of the Department and the hon. Minister, and the Minister responded only after the intervention of the Prime Minister. I would like to know whether there was an undue delay, an inordinate delay.

SHRI A. RAJA: Sir, I have the courage to tell the House that there was an inordinate delay in constituting the TAC. What is the reason behind it? I am having high regards for the hon. Prime Minister and Parliament. But that does not mean that each and every activity is intervened by the higher-ups. ...*(Interruptions)*...

DR. K. MALAISAMY: What was the difficulty?

SHRI A. RAJA: I will come to that. Sir, the discretionary power, which has been sanctioned to the Cabinet Minister in this Department, whether in the 90s or in 2002, has been enjoyed by all the Ministers. Now, when the trade unions put forth their view that since the TAC had not served its purpose, and it was wastage of the BSNL money, the Committee should not be constituted. So, there was this divergent view amongst the trade unions. So, when I assumed charge, there was a second thought as to whether the TAC was necessary or not. Still, that question is there. In spite of that, I decided to continue with TAC. My point of view was that. It is an existing policy, and the service of the BSNL and MTNL should not be equated with other private operators. Since we have our own social obligations, this has to be reflected and represented by people having the same social attitude and social mentality. We also have the responsibility to see how the services can be extended to people who are at the lowest strata of the society. So, there was a delay. Now the delay was not on the part of the Minister. The delay was because of the confusion that whether TAC should be constituted. Thereafter, we resolved the problem. But this is not a question of inordinate delay, resulting in financial loss to the Government, or, to the BSNL.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Shrimati Viplove Thakur. ...*(Interruptions)*...

**श्रीमती विप्लव ठाकुर** : सभापति जी, मैं मंत्री जी से जानना चाहती हूं ...(**व्यवधान**)... बैठिए ...(**व्यवधान**)... इन्होंने बहुत explain करके कहा है, यूनियन का बोला है कि डिले इसलिए हुई है। जब एक बार decision हो गया है ...(**व्यवधान**)...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Shanappa, your name has not been called.

**श्रीमती विप्लव ठाकुर** : कमेटी बननी है और इन्होंने कहा है कि कमेटी भंग की जाती है। जब एम.पी. का time पांच साल का है या राज्य सभा का छह साल का है, आप कमेटी के जो पांच मैम्बर्स ले रहे हैं, उनके लिए तो ठीक है कि आप नाम मांगिए, लेकिन एम.पी. को continue रखिए, क्योंकि उसका टाइम है। मेरा दूसरा सप्लीमेंट्री प्रश्न यह है कि पहले State Telephone Advisory Committee हुआ करती थी, क्या आप उसको दुबारा शुरू करने की सोच रहे हैं? क्या यह district में है कि केवल constituency तक है? क्योंकि पूरे राज्य की जो प्रॉब्लम्स होती हैं, वे सॉल्व नहीं होती हैं, इसलिए क्या आप उसको दुबारा से रिवाइव करने की सोचेंगे?

**श्री सचिन पायलट** : चेयरमैन सर, हमें यह नहीं भूलना चाहिए कि TACs किस उद्देश्य को लेकर गठित की गई थीं। इसका उद्देश्य यह था कि उपभोक्ताओं की मुश्किलात को विभाग के सामने पेश करने के लिए एक प्लेटफार्म चाहिए था। चूंकि माननीय सदस्य इस कमेटी के मैम्बर होते हैं, by virtue of being a Member of Parliament, वे TAC के मैम्बर automatically बन जाते हैं, लेकिन ये TACs इसलिए गठित की गई थीं कि पूरे देश भर में BSNL और MTNL की जो services हैं, उनको बेहतर बनाने के लिए एक interface हो और जो सारी मुश्किलें आती हैं, वे कंपनी और मंत्रालय तक पहुंचें और मंत्रालय भी अपनी बात उपभोक्ताओं तक पहुंचा सके। सर, मैं आपके माध्यम से माननीय सदस्य महोदया से निवेदन करना चाहता हूं कि जो TAC बनी हैं, प्रदेश में स्थानीय स्तर पर जो दिक्कतें आती हैं, उनका इजहार करने के लिए बनाई गई हैं। यह सदन है। अगर इनको BSNL और MTNL के बारे में कोई विशेष दिक्कत है, तो वे हमें आकर बताएं, हम उन पर निश्चित रूप से काम करेंगे।

**श्री अली अनवर अंसारी** : महोदय, मैं बिल्कुल जाती तजुर्बे की बुनियाद पर मंत्री महोदय को यह बताना चाहता हूं कि इनका एक पत्र आता है कि आप TAC के मैम्बर्स के लिए पांच नाम भेजें। हमनें पांच नाम भेज दिए। उसके एक महीने के बाद फिर पत्र आता है कि आप मैम्बर्स का नाम भेज दें। इस पर हमने कहा कि हमने तो नाम भेज दिया।

**श्री सभापति** : आप सवाल पूछिए।

**श्री अली अनवर अंसारी** : मैं सवाल पूछ रहा हूं। हमने फिर इनको लिख कर दिया। छः महीने हो गए, लेकिन उसका जवाब नहीं आया। कुछ पुराने मैम्बर्स को continue किया गया, कुछ नए लोगों को जोड़ा गया और सबका टेलीफोन discontinue हो गया। TAC के मैम्बर्स के लिए आपने हर मैम्बर को पांच नाम भेजने के लिए कहा है और आपने छः महीने तक वह service provide नहीं कराई, इसकी भरपाई कौन करेगा? आप सवाल का जवाब नहीं देते हैं।

**श्री सभापति** : आप सवाल पूछिए न।

**श्री अली अनवर अंसारी** : छः-छः महीने तक आप सवाल का जवाब नहीं देते हैं। हर मैम्बर पांच लोगों को TAC के लिए nominate करते हैं, लेकिन छः महीने तक तो वे मैम्बर्स नहीं रहे, तो इसकी भरपाई कौन करेगा?

**श्री सचिन पायलट** : चेयरमैन सर, जहां तक TACs के formation की बात है, कहीं पर यह प्रावधान नहीं है कि माननीय सदस्यों के द्वारा जो चिन्हित नाम हैं, उनको लेना है। लेकिन चूंकि ये जनप्रतिनिधि हैं, मंत्रालय ने इनकी भावनाओं का आदर करते हुए इनसे नाम लिया है और हमारी कोशिश रहती है कि उसमें समाज के हर वर्ग का प्रतिनिधित्व हो। जैसा आपको इससे पहले उत्तर में बताया गया कि यह विवाद हुआ था कि TAC बनाने का आज कोई लाभ है या नहीं, इस पर चर्चा हुई थी। ...(**व्यवधान**)...

**श्री अली अनवर अंसारी** : नाम आपके मांगने पर भेजा गया था, हमने खुद-ब-खुद नहीं भेजा था।

**श्री सभापति** : आप बैठ जाइए प्लीज़। आप वक्त मत जाया कीजिए। ...(**व्यवधान**)...

**श्री सचिन पायलट** : सांसदों ने हमें जिन पांच नामों का निवेदन किया है, उनको TAC में मेंबर बनाने पर विचार किया जाएगा। यह एक continuous process है। अलग-अलग राज्यों की अलग-अलग समय पर कमेटी बनती रहती है।

SHRI BHARATKUMAR RAUT: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I come from Mumbai and the last Telephone Advisory Committee was constituted in 2006. Its term ended in 2008 automatically. During this two years' term, there was only one meeting of the TAC, which was organised by the General Manager. My suggestion to the hon. Minister is that there should be some regulation, some directive from the Ministry that in every three months there should be a meeting of the TAC; otherwise, why do you make us the members of the TAC?

Sir, another thing I would like to suggest - I have also written to the hon. Minister - that there should be, at least, one common room for all TAC Members in all telephone exchanges so that they can come and listen to the grievances of the people and do their job more effectively. So, I request that these two suggestions should be accepted.

SHRI SACHIN PILOT: Sir, I think, it is a suggestion, and we will examine the suggestion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Now, Question No. 207.

**Hostage issue with Singapore**

*207. SHRI MOHD. ALI KHAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has taken up the hostage issue with Government of Singapore recently;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps being taken with the Government of Singapore on the issue of safety particularly of the women and the children among the Indians living there?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI S.M. KRISHNA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) A Singapore registered vessel 'Kota Wajar' was hijacked by Somali pirates in the Gulf of Aden on 15 October 2009. Two Indians are on board the ship. The issue of their safe and early release was immediately taken up by our High Commission in Singapore with the Government of Singapore and ship owning company. The Government of Singapore has informed that negotiations are still going on between the owner of the vessel and the hijackers. All crew members are reported to be safe. The Government of Singapore has assured us that they are continuing to monitor this incident closely and are working with the owner of the vessel to ensure the safe release of the crew members.

(c) There is a large community of persons of Indian origin, (predominantly Tamils) in Singapore who are well integrated into the local system. As citizens of Singapore, their rights are derived from the Singaporean constitution.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question hour is over.

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